UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.5/1996/4
6 May 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Special session - 1996
21-31 May 1996
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

REVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMISSION

Proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General is in the process of preparing his proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. In accordance with programme planning regulation 4.2,

> "The medium-term plan shall be a translation of legislative mandates into programmes. Its objectives and strategies shall be derived from the policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental organs. It shall reflect Member States' priorities as set out in legislation adopted by functional and regional intergovernmental bodies within their spheres of competence and by the General Assembly, on advice from the Committee for Programme and Coordination. In this context, subsidiary intergovernmental and expert bodies should, accordingly, refrain from making recommendations on the relative priorities of the major programmes as outlined in the medium-term plan and should instead propose, through the Committee, the relative priorities to be accorded to the various subprogrammes within their respective fields of competence. The medium-term plan should clearly identify new activities."

2. Regulation 4.16 states that:

> "Intergovernmental and expert bodies shall, when reviewing the relevant chapters of the proposed medium-term plan, recommend priorities among

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subprogrammes in their field of competence. They shall refrain from making recommendations on priority among major programmes. The Committee for Programme and Coordination, when making recommendations, and the Secretary-General, when making proposals on programme priorities, shall take into account the views of the above-mentioned bodies."

3. The attention of the Commission is also drawn to regulation 4.15 which states that:

"... priorities shall be based on the importance of the objective to Member States, the Organization's capacity to achieve it and the real effectiveness and usefulness of the results."

4. As a result of decisions by the General Assembly on the form and structure of the medium-term plan, sections of the plan which in previous plans were classified as programmes are now termed "subprogrammes". For the review of the Commission, this note presents the overall narrative of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the draft narrative of the subprogramme on social development.

Programme 5. Policy coordination and sustainable development

5. The overall orientation of the programme is to facilitate better integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations in the economic and social sphere by providing support to the central policy-making bodies and coordination processes on the various aspects of development. The mandate for the programme derives from the secretariat responsibility to provide support to the General Assembly, in particular its Second and Third Committees, the Economic and Social Council and relevant subsidiary bodies, relevant resolutions concerning international economic cooperation, and resolutions on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, including, in particular, General Assembly resolution 47/212 on the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, as well as from relevant aspects of the mandate of the Secretary-General, including his responsibilities as the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

6. The programme is under the responsibility of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

7. The work of the Department helps Member States to develop agreed standards, policies and programmes on issues arising from globalization of environmental and social problems and from the marginalization of certain disadvantaged groups. It also deals with certain aspects of democratization like the advancement of women and the involvement of new global actors, such as members of civil society, in the policy-making and standard-setting initiatives of the international community.

8. By the end of the period covered by the plan, it is expected that the Department would have accomplished the following:

(a) Strengthened the role of the Organization as a forum for debate and consensus-building in the economic and social spheres;

(b) Provided effective support to standing political processes and relevant ad hoc processes for the development of integrated and coordinated policy responses to development issues and to emerging global problems; for the negotiation of global agreements on norms, standards and cooperative actions; and for the enhancement of the effectiveness of operational activities for development;

(c) Promoted and monitored, as appropriate, the implementation of agreed plans, strategies, programmes or platforms for action, including the outcome of United Nations conferences for which the Department has responsibility;

(d) Enhanced policy coherence and coordination both within the United Nations and amongst United Nations system organizations;

(e) Strengthened linkages between the United Nations and civil society and developed innovative means of cooperation and modes of partnership in areas of common interest, including operational activities for development at the country level;

(f) Increased awareness of United Nations work in the economic and social spheres and related fields.

Subprogramme 5.3 Social development

9. The subprogamme, which is implemented by the Division for Social Policy and Development, will seek to strengthen international cooperation for social development, with particular attention to the three core issues of poverty eradication, employment generation and social integration, in the context of the comprehensive and detailed framework of commitments and policies for action by Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations provided by the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the 1995 World Summit for Social Development.

10. More specifically, the objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To facilitate intergovernmental dialogue on social issues and trends and their policy implications in support of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The subprogramme will promote common norms, policies and cooperative actions aimed at facilitating the realization in an integrated manner of the Social Summit objectives, and develop integrated approaches to issues that cut across the economic, social and cultural domains, with particular emphasis on the contribution to social cohesion of policies to reduce poverty and generate employment. The subprogramme will also contribute to the efforts by the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty, in the context of both the Social Summit objectives and activities related to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006);

(b) To promote the implementation and to coordinate the preparation and monitoring of United Nations declarations and programmes of action relevant to

social development, such as the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the World Plan of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the International Year for Older Persons in 1999. These activities relate principally to the integration into society of groups which, because of their vulnerability or lack of power, are not fully participating in the life of the community;

(c) To strengthen participation of and cooperation among all actors concerned with social development (Governments at all levels, all elements of civil society and the private sector) in promoting national objectives and internationally agreed norms.

ANNEX

Legislative mandates

Subprogramme 5.3 Social development

General Assembly resolutions: 37/51 International Plan of Action on Ageing; 37/52 World Programme of Action for Disabled Persons; 44/66 Monitoring of information on effective measures and alternative methods of implementing plans, strategies and programmes of action in the social field at the national level; 45/199 International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade; 46/91 Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and related activities; 48/96 Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities; 49/155 The role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends; 50/161 Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action); 50/81 (annex) World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond; 50/107 International Year and Decade for the Eradication of Poverty; 50/141 International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages; 50/144 Follow-up to the Standard Rules and Long-term Strategy in favour of Disabled Persons.